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OT 780 Ancient Near Eastern Literature and the Old Testament

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Human societies give account of themselves through a variety of means. Most ancient societies speculated about origins, explored relationships between divine, human, and natural realms, and considered their connections with epic events of the past. Such philosophical and theological speculation is preserved in written documents, much of which has only come to light in the past century and a half. This seminar explores the rich heritage of ancient Near Eastern thought as compared to that preserved for us in the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

A. To study selected ancient Near Eastern documents in light of their relationship to similar biblical texts, or at least to texts dealing with similar issues in the Bible.

B. To compare and contrast the ancient world’s Weltanschauung in light of this study and to relate it to the Old Testament itself.

C. To consider definitions of such concepts as history, myth, mythopoeic, and mytho-historical, and to evaluate their usefulness in describing ancient theological and philosophical documents.

D. To examine ways in which modern scholarship has evaluated the multifarious voices in the ancient world, including the Old Testament.

E. To trace the theological trajectory of these expressions in the Old Testament into Christian thought, and to consider their significance for modern times.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Textbooks (in addition to assigned readings on reserve in library)


B. Requirements

The course requirements will be of two types. First, the student will be expected to prepare for discussion assigned readings from selected ancient Near Eastern texts for each week’s class. These will be distributed the previous week, or placed on reserve. The success of the seminar will depend upon the thorough preparation and participation of each class
member. Second, the student will write three research papers during the term on topics chosen in consultation with the instructor. The results of certain of these papers will be offered to the seminar in the form of brief presentations and discussion.

Topics for the papers may be book reviews of pertinent books related to the various topics of the seminar, exegetical treatments of certain biblical texts that have particular importance for the seminar’s topics, or surveys of ancient Near Eastern themes recurring in class discussions. These topics should arise naturally from the seminar discussion in the first half of the semester.

Each reflection or research paper should be approximately 2500 words (approximately 8-10 pages, including bibliography). In matters of form and style, the paper should follow Patrick H. Alexander, et al., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999). The student should make sure his or her name is clearly visible on the first page of the paper along with the SPO number. The paper should be stapled in the upper left corner with no bindings or folders of any kind.

IV. Student Evaluation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class preparation, attendance, and participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers and class presentations</td>
<td>70%</td>
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